This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

US
13637
30

Davis, Robert Noxon : Toppan, 1902

WS 13637.30

Harvard College
Library

FROM THE ESTATE OF
MRS. CHARLES ROBERT SANGER
OF CAMBRIDGE

RECEIVED FEBRUARY 19, 1936

MEMOIR

OF

ROBERT NOXON TOPPAN

BY

ANDREW McFARLAND DAVIS

Robert Noxon Toppan

Engraved for The Colonial Society of Massachusetts from a portrait from life

MEMOIR

OF

ROBERT NOXON TOPPAN

BY

ANDREW McFARLAND DAVIS

REPRINTED FROM

THE PUBLICATIONS

OF

The Colonial Society of Massachusetts

VOL. VII.

CAMBRIDGE

JOHN WILSON AND SON

University Press

1902

LS 13637.30

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM THE ESTATE OF
MRS. CHARLES ROBERT SANGER
FEBRUARY 19, 1936

MEMOIR

OF

ROBERT NOXON TOPPAN, A.M.

BY

ANDREW McFARLAND DAVIS.

At the third Stated Meeting of this Society, in March, 1893, Robert Noxon Toppan was elected a Resident Member. He had at that time already laid the foundation for the reputation which he afterward acquired for thorough and scholarly historical work, so that he was welcomed to our fellowship as a desirable addition. During the period of his membership his fame as an investigator and as a careful and diligent student of historical facts steadily grew, and to this was finally added full recognition as a discriminating and conscientious editor through the publication, in 1898 and 1899, by the Prince Society, of his Edward Randolph. His contribution to our proceedings of two brief but learned papers, — The Right to Coin under the Colonial Charters, read at the February Meeting in 1894, and The Failure to Establish an Hereditary Political Aristocracy in the Colonies, communicated in March, 1897 — aided materially in establishing his name as an historical student. With the growth of knowledge of his capacity on our part, came the desire that the Society should profit by it, not only through communications at our meetings, but also through service in the body of officers to whom is intrusted the management of our affairs. Conservative in temperament, prudent, cautious and conscientious in all his actions, he was eminently fitted to act as an adviser in such a body, and the selection of his name as a candidate for member of our Council was endorsed by the Society

with cordial recognition of the fitness of the nomination. His unexpected death on the tenth of May, 1901, came as a shock to the community. Those who knew him best and who were most familiar with the work which he had performed, best know what we had a right to expect from him in the future, and can best appreciate our loss.

Mr. Toppan was born in Philadelphia on the seventeenth of October, 1836. It seems almost a pity that one can not substitute Newburyport for Philadelphia, and thus be able to say that he was the sixth Toppan in the direct line of male descent from Abraham Toppan to be born in Newbury or Newburyport. Charles Toppan, his father, who was born there in 1796, had not, however, the same mental characteristics as his four predecessors of the name of Toppan. He was gifted with a natural capacity for sketching and was fond of art and of travel. Life in Newburyport under these circumstances was not congenial to his disposition and he moved to Philadelphia, where, at the early age of eighteen years, he formed a connection with a firm of bank-note engravers, thus laying the foundation for a prosperous career which culminated in his being selected as President of the American Bank Note Company in 1858, at which time the more prominent of the bank-note engravers of the country consolidated their forces by the organization of this company.

In 1826, Charles Toppan married Laura Ann Noxon, a daughter of Doctor Robert Noxon of Poughkeepsie, New York, after whom their son Robert Noxon Toppan was named. In 1852, the family went abroad and remained until 1854. They then moved to New York, where they established a home which they occupied until Mr. Charles Toppan resigned the presidency of the American Bank Note Company in 1860, and again went abroad, where he remained until his death, at Florence, Italy, in 1874.

Robert's early education was begun in private schools in Philadelphia. When he reached the point of preparing for college, he studied under a private tutor with a view to entering Yale College. His course of study was, however, interrupted by his joining the family in their migration to Europe in 1852. During this trip he was for a brief space of time at a boarding school in Paris. On his return to this country, in 1854, Robert renewed his studies under a tutor, but this time with a view to entering Harvard Col-

lege, which he accomplished in 1855, gaining admission to the Sophomore Class. In 1858, he graduated with rank high enough to secure his election to the Φ. B. K., and then joined his family in New York. It was his desire at that time to follow in the footsteps of his father. Whether the next move that he made was in the line of that desire, or indicates an abandonment of the purpose, it is difficult to say, but as a matter of fact, instead of entering the service of the American Bank Note Company, he enrolled himself at the Columbia Law School and simultaneously entered a downtown law office as a student. This Law School was then in its infancy and the methods of instruction permitted — perhaps it may be said that for a time they encouraged — this course. Robert was not alone in it; many of his fellow students did the same. He took his LL.B. from Columbia College in May, 1861, and on the fourth of June of the same year was admitted to the New York Bar. It can hardly be said that he ever entered upon active practice in New York, but for a short time he had a desk in the office of his relative Mr. Samuel B. Ruggles.

In 1862, Mr. Toppan published a translation of certain selections from Jouffroy's *Mélanges Philosophiques* and *Cours de Droit Naturel* under the title of Moral Philosophy: Extracts from Jouffroy. These extracts taken together, says the translator in his Preface, —

"form a complete whole. The first lays down the problem of human destiny, and shows that the problem can only be solved philosophically by a study of the facts of human nature. The second gives a description of the moral facts of human nature. The moral facts of human nature being ascertained, the third gives us the moral law that we ought to obey, in order to accomplish as fully as possible our destiny in this world."

Jouffroy was a pupil of Cousin and it is said that being uncertain about the enigma of our destiny, yet detesting incredulity, he was "resolute to solve the question by the light of reason, since he had lost that of faith." The moral problem which is laid down in these extracts is given by the translator as follows: —

"What I ought to do, is to go toward my end; what every intelligent and free being ought to do is to proceed toward his end; in advancing toward it this intelligent and free being and myself not only do what we

ought to do, go toward our good, but we contribute also to the realization of absolute good, which appears to be made up of the accomplishment of all the particular ends of all the beings composing the creation.

"This, gentlemen, is my solution of the moral problem. I said, that not only is this solution manifest, but that a method results from it to determine for all beings known to us in what good consists, and consequently what we ought to do; and therefore the rule of our conduct in all possible cases."

It happens that the copy of Moral Philosophy: Extracts from Jouffroy on the shelves of the Library of Harvard University is the one which was presented by the translator to Dr. James Walker. The generation of Harvard students which came under the influence of that remarkable teacher is now passing away, but the tradition of his great personal ascendancy and of the sway that he exerted over the lives of his pupils is still fresh. It is perhaps too much to assert that this recent graduate, in thus sending to his former preceptor these extracts from Jouffroy, desired to show him that escape from personal contact had not released him from the beneficent influences exerted by his presence; but at least we can say that the rule of his life was to be found in the moral law laid down by Jouffroy, and that he always did his part toward contributing to the realization of absolute good.

The same year that the translation from Jouffroy was published, Robert closed his desk in Mr. Ruggles's law office and joined the family in Europe. For many years he remained there, journeying from city to city, a spectator here of some great festival or pageant, a participant there in some great historical event. His mind was stored with reminiscences connected with current affairs in Eastern Europe, covering the gamut from *coups d'état* in Paris, to the peaceful election of a Pope in Rome; from the glittering and gorgeous display of the Empire in the days of its supreme power in the capital city of France, to the havoc and distress upon the battle-field of Sedan, where the Empire breathed its last, which he visited while yet the dead were unburied and many of the wounded uncared for. He became, of course, a proficient linguist and when in Madrid was tendered the position of Secretary of Legation by the Hon. John P. Hale, then our Minister at the Spanish Court. This office seemed to him to

open up a career for which his contact with the European world appeared eminently to have fitted him, and he gladly accepted it. An unfortunate attack of illness prevented him from entering upon his duties, however, and to his great disappointment, he was obliged to give up the place. If we bear in mind the influence of his father's artistic temperament upon his tastes, and take into consideration the extraordinary opportunities which he had enjoyed for travel and for acquiring different languages, we can realize that a diplomatic career must have seemed tempting to him and can appreciate how great the blow which closed what seemed to offer an opening to enter upon such a career.

During his entire stay in Europe, Mr. Toppan maintained close touch with his native land, through the necessity for frequent visits upon matters of business. He always had a fondness for Newburyport, and when, a few years after the death of his father, he returned to this country, he made his headquarters at that place. On the sixth of October, 1880, he was married there to Sarah Moody Cushing, the daughter of the Hon. William Cushing of Newburyport. The marriage was followed by another trip to Europe, after which Mr. and Mrs. Toppan lived for about a year in Newburyport. In 1882, they moved to Cambridge, where he afterward built a house for his family, in which they now reside.

Mr. Toppan's interest in Newburyport was, of course, based upon the fact that his ancestors had lived there. He was much concerned in the history of his own family and incidentally in the history of the town. He was proud of the record of the town and welcomed the efforts of its people to keep alive a knowledge of their past. These efforts were at that time fairly represented by the work of the Historical Society of Old Newbury, an organization having a membership of representative men of the place, all of whom felt kindly towards the purposes of the organization, but none of whom had interest enough in the subject to enter actively upon the work of the Society, or to spur others on to do what he himself did not care to undertake. The spasm of energy which had led to the establishment of the Society was followed by a period of torpor after the enthusiasm of the founders had subsided. Mr. Toppan deliberately set himself to work to revive the interest of Newburyport people in historical work and to stimulate the Society into some sort of activity. Largely through

his personal influence, a room for the use of the Society was secured in the Public Library building. He cast about for some means of interesting his fellow-members in active work, and it occurred to him that it would be a good idea to secure from each person whose family was entitled to a coat of arms, a shield upon which those arms should be emblazoned. The act of looking up the question would set each member of the Society at work and the shields, when obtained, could be used to decorate the hall in which they met. This ingenious idea was actually carried out and fully realized the hopes of its originator.

Mr. Toppan's position in political affairs was one of sympathy with every movement which tended to elevate the morals of the country or to reform recognized evils existing in our form of government. Being absolutely without political ambition, he held a position of indifference to partisan questions and ever stood ready to co-operate, with personal service or with purse, in the strife for determining, upon broad grounds of principle, the various political questions which arose during his period of manhood. He believed that political science was worthy of study and that the world would be benefited if educated men should turn their attention towards the solution of its problems. With the purpose of carrying out these views, he consulted with Professor Torrey and, in 1880, forwarded to the Treasurer of Harvard College one hundred and fifty dollars, "to be used as a prize or prizes, to be awarded in 1881, on Political Science, in the graduate department of the University." From year to year thereafter he repeated this gift, until 1894, when he deposited three thousand dollars with the Treasurer of the College, as a fund for the annual offer of a prize for essays on Political Science, and the Toppan Prize then became one of the annual prizes of the University. Owing to occasional lapses in the bestowal of the prize, the fund has increased to nearly thirty-five hundred dollars. This serves as a compensation for the reduction of interest carried by the general fund and practically guarantees the accomplishment in the future of the wish of the founder, — that the amount offered annually for the Toppan Prize shall be one hundred and fifty dollars.

Mr. Toppan's publications, if we exclude the translation of Jouffroy and a single paper on Bank Note Engraving, may be divided into two classes: those dealing with the subject of money,

and those which treat of topics connected with our local history. All, however, are distinctly historical in character. In dealing with them it will perhaps be more in consonance with the methods employed herein to classify them under these headings than to describe them in chronological succession. In treating of money, we should naturally expect that one whose material interests were so closely associated with bank note engraving, would have selected for study that branch of the subject which deals with paper-money. Such, however, was not the case. Circumstances turned his attention toward the questions of what would be the best metal for use in a uniform international coinage and what would be the best unit for such a coinage. The various papers which he published on these questions were put forth while the struggle between gold and silver was in progress in this country, and his participation in this controversy furnishes illustration of what I have already said concerning his readiness to co-operate in the determination of political questions upon the basis of principle. His views upon the questions under discussion were clear and well defined and would, perhaps, through their own force have led him to take up his pen in their advocacy, but if he needed stimulation he found it in the sympathetic attitude of his friend and relative, Mr. Ruggles, in whose office he at one time had a desk, who was then Chairman of the Committee of the New York Chamber of Commerce on International Coinage, and who as a delegate had already advocated the twenty-five franc piece as a unit for such a coinage, at the International Statistical Congress at Berlin in 1863, and again at the Monetary Congress at Paris in 1867. Mr. Toppan's first publication on the subject of Money was in the form of a letter, in 1877, addressed to Mr. Ruggles as Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Committee on International Coinage. It was published by the Chamber of Commerce under the title of The Historical Succession of Monetary Metallic Standards.

In 1878, Mr. Toppan was a delegate to the International Congress for the Unification of Weights and Measures and Money. We have no record of any communication from him to that body, but in December of that year he submitted to the American Social Science Association a communication in advocacy of the adoption of a unit previously proposed by himself for an International Coin-

age. This paper was published in 1879, under the title of A Unit of Eight Grammes, proposed by Robert Noxon Toppan. He reverted to the subject in April, 1880, when he read a paper before the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, which was published by that Society, under the title of Some Modern Monetary Questions viewed by the Light of Antiquity.

In 1884, he took up the subject again and published a little book entitled Historical Summary of Metallic Money. In this he gives the names of the several authors upon whom he had relied for information concerning both ancient and modern monetary systems. This volume may be said to be the most complete and the most ambitious of his several publications on Money.

In 1888, he read a paper before the American Antiquarian Society at its April meeting in Boston, which was published in the Proceedings of that Society, and was also separately printed under the title of Monetary Unification.

In all these papers he was the advocate of a single standard, which, in his opinion, could be only gold. He believed that there was a tendency towards unification, but that on account of national prejudices and jealousies no existing coin could be adopted as the International Unit. In the coinage of all nations which had made use of gold, he found some coin which approximated closely to our five-dollar piece. Inasmuch as it was not probable that either the sovereign, the twenty-five franc piece, the twenty-mark piece, or the five-dollar gold piece could be adopted, by reason of national jealousies, he proposed a compromise unit which should weigh eight even grammes and which should be nine-tenths fine. While this would not agree with any existing coin, it would closely approximate one of the coins in use in each of the prominent monetary systems of the world, and its adoption would cause but little disturbance to values, and would entirely eliminate the question of national prejudices. The discussion of the subject carried on in these various publications, indicates extensive research and scholarly attainments. I have already stated that all were historical in their treatment of the subject. Without undertaking to go into detail upon this point, it will be sufficient to recall the titles of these papers to show the extent of the work of this nature necessarily performed in some of them, by the writer.

Mr. Toppan's first contribution towards our local history was

a set of biographical sketches of the natives and residents of Old Newbury, Massachusetts, prepared for the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the settlement of the town, in response to a resolution of the Historical Society of Old Newbury. He was restrained to brevity by the words of the resolution, and, in some cases, still further by the meagreness of the details which could be found concerning some of the characters; but he succeeded in getting together a series of sketches of great value as a contribution toward the local history of Newbury; and they were creditable to the writer. They were published by the Society under the title of Brief Biographical Sketches. For some reason, the volume does not contain any sketch of the life of Edward Rawson, one of the early settlers of the town and one of the proprietors of 1642. Mr. Toppan left a manuscript sketch of the life of Rawson, which was read at a subsequent meeting of the Society.

The two papers read by Mr. Toppan before this Society in 1894 and 1897 have already been mentioned. Their titles sufficiently indicate the interesting character of their contents, and it only remains to say, that although both are brief, they are representative in the thorough and systematic character of the researches upon which they are based.

During the years 1898 and 1899, the Prince Society issued the five volumes comprising the work entitled by the Society in its calendar, Edward Randolph, and more specifically described upon the title-pages in the volumes as "Edward Randolph: Including his Letters and Official Papers from the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies in America, with other Documents relating chiefly to the vacating of the Royal Charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1676–1703. With Historical Illustrations and a Memoir." The Memoir, which is comprised in the first volume and in the first half of the second, is the most extensive and most elaborate historical production from Mr. Toppan's pen. It is based largely upon the documents and letters contained in the volumes which succeed it, and is worthy of its place at the front of this work. Like the Randolph papers, it is profusely annotated with helpful cross-references, explanatory notes, and notes containing additional information. The whole work bears evidence of patient labor, diligent research, and scholarly knowledge of the

subject. For several years, while engaged in preparing these papers for publication, Mr. Toppan was occupied in the study of the papers themselves and of the contemporary literature on both sides of the Atlantic which could throw light upon the subject, or upon the lives of the men mentioned in the papers. The student of these volumes has the benefit of this protracted study, the result of which is one of the best edited series of papers to be found among the many which treat of the history of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay. Mr. Toppan himself might well have been content to rest his reputation as an historical student and an editor upon this publication alone, and he had every reason to be proud of its reception by students of American history.

Mr. Toppan rounded out his work in this line by communicating to the American Antiquarian Society in October, 1899, a copy of a fragment of the Records of the Andros Council, which is in Randolph's handwriting and is now in that Society's possession; and by communicating to the following April meeting a copy of the official transcript of the Andros Records in the form in which they were transmitted to London. Both of these documents were published in the Society's Proceedings. He also communicated to the Massachusetts Historical Society, at its meeting in November, 1899, a copy of the Records of the Council meetings under President Joseph Dudley; and these were in turn published in the Proceedings of that Society. The importance of this work will be realized if it be remembered that the published Records of the Massachusetts Colony end in 1686. The Records of the Province have never been published, but the edition of the Province Laws, edited by our associate Mr. Abner C. Goodell, partially covers this defect. These laws do not begin, however, until 1692. In the progress of his work, Mr. Toppan's attention was called to this lamentable gap in our State publications, and in this easy manner he rendered a service of great importance to students of American history.

There still remains one publication of Mr. Toppan which I have hitherto mentioned only casually. In 1896, he read before the Trustees of the American Bank Note Company, a paper which was published under the title of A Hundred Years of Bank Note Engraving. His scholarly methods of research were so much a part of his every effort, that even in this paper, which was not prepared

for a learned Society, one can recognize their effect upon him. In it he touches briefly upon what was then known of the early banks of New England and afterward gives an account of the different bank note engravers of America and of the several inventions which have modified the process of engraving and printing.

At the time of his death, Mr. Toppan was a member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, the American Historical Association, the American Antiquarian Society, the American Philosophical Society, the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the Bunker Hill Monument Association, of which he was a Director, and the Prince Society, of which he was Corresponding Secretary.

I have failed in what I have written, if my account of Mr. Toppan's life and work does not bring before the reader the picture of one who was faithful in the performance of every trust which he assumed. Modest and unpretentious in his deportment, simple and manly in his ways, he trod the path of life with an ever enlarging circle of friends whose respect and esteem for him increased with their intimacy and their knowledge of his doings.